

EXHIBIT 27

Steve
Ditko

in the 1960s

in his own words

in his interviews

in the words
of the fans who knew him

DITKO-0001

Stan Lee letter to Jerry Bails (January 9, 1963): This very candid Stan Lee letter was written before the explosive popularity of Marvel comics that would soon follow. The letter was printed slightly abridged in *The Comic Reader* #16 (February 23, 1963) with Jerry Bails' reply (next page).

stan lee 655 madison avenue n. y. 21 templeton 8-7900

1/9/63

Dear Jerry:

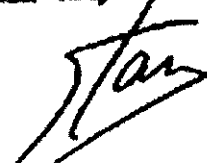
Enjoyed your letter as usual. Now, a few words of explanation regarding some of your points....

You're right about Al Hartley's art work not being right for THOR. Actually, Al specializes in teen-age strips (He does the PATSY WALKER mag for us) and simply pinch-bit JERRY. INTO MYSTERY because it was an emergency-- Jack was busy with an FF ish that was late, Joe Sinnott was tied up with another job, etc. Al would be the first to admit it's not his cup of tea, although if he HADN'T consented to draw that story, we'd probably have missed an issue. "No loss" you might say-- but if ever we DO miss an ish, it involves all sorts of red tape with the Post Office, penalty fees, etc.

Actually, we have a very small staff-- quite unlike the NATIONAL COMICS GROUP. If one of our men gets ill, or if a new mag is suddenly scheduled, it throws everything haywire. We seem to exist from crisis to crisis-- not that we'd want it any other way! As for Jack starting strips and then turning 'em over to less talented artists-- well, it's not quite that simple. The poor guy only has two hands, and can only draw with ONE! I like to have him start as many strips as possible, to get them off on the right foot-- but he cannot physically keep 'em all up-- in fact, I sometimes wonder how he does as much as he does do. At present he will concentrate on FF and our new war mag, SGT. FURY-- as well as pinch-hitting for other features if and when needed. AND he does almost all of our covers, of course!

As for Ditko's art, you're right on most counts. But again, the pressure of deadlines has to be our excuse. You can't possibly imagine how rushed we are. It isn't a question of can't our artists do better (or can't I write better)--- it's more a question of how well can we do in the brief time allotted to us? Some day, in some far distant Nirvana, perhaps we will have a chance to produce a strip without a frantic deadline hanging over us... and then, brother, you'll see script and art work that'll put EVERYBODY to shame!

All the best-



PS:

You ask for news of future plans--

Well, we have a new character in the works for STRANGE TALES (just a 5-page filler named DR. STRANGE--) Steve Ditko is gonna draw him. Sort of a black magic theme. The first story is nothing great, but perhaps we can make something of him-- 'twas Steve's idea, and I figured we'd give it a chance, although again, we had to rush the first one too much. Little sidelight: Originally decided to call him MR. STRANGE, but thought the MR. bit too similar to MR. FANTASTIC-- now however, I just remember we had a villain called DR. STRANGE just ~~xxxxxx~~ recently in one of our mags-- hope it won't be too confusing! Oh well...

FF is easily our favorite book here at the Marvel bullpen. It's my baby and I love it. People have asked for original scripts-- actually, we don't even HAVE any. I write the story plot-- go over it with Jack-- he draws it up based on our hasty conferences-- then, with his drawings in front of me, I write the captions and dialogue, usually right on the original art work! It seems to work out well, although it's not a system I'd advise anyone else to try. ---We get dozens of letters a day asking for FF puppets, T-shirts, membership pins, records, everything-under-the-sun---- it really seems to have attracted some very loyal fans. The THING seems to be becoming one of the favorite characters, and the YANCY STREET GANG a standing gag with lots of fans-- at least 6 x letters a day signed THE Y.S.GANG!

ANT-MAN seemed to need a shot in the arm, so we added the WASP as A.M.'s partner. Hope she'll help. THOR goes his merry way with a seemingly devoted circle of fans, and I'm inclined to think we'll be playing up life in ASGARD more and more as the issues go by. As for SPIDER-MAN, I wouldn't be surprised if he turns into a real winner, judging by the mail ~~xxx~~ we're receiving-- tremendous enthusiasm from the readers.

Mail-- that's my biggest problem. I take it too damn seriously-- read each and every letter-- wish I could answer 'em all-- we get over a hundred a day-- sometimes over 500!!! (after a long week-end). Can't keep up with it. Fans keep asking for MORE letters pages-- wish we didn't have ANY! It's like a tiger by the tail-- can't let go--

Can't really tell about our new plans, because they change from day to day. We play it by ear-- and base many decisions on comments from our mailbag. But, hope the above may have been somewhat helpful-- back to FF now--



From *The Comic Reader* #16 (February 23, 1963): Below is Jerry Bails' reply to Stan Lee's letter.

((Well, Stan, you can always use TCR to answer your hundreds of loyal fans in a more personal way than possible in the pages of your mags. Thanks a million for this wonderful letter.))